critical digest

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

Fall Drama Prospects

Leonard Key, co-producer of Pal Joey, and Frank Finklehoffe plan three productions for the coming season. Ankles Aweigh, musical by Guy Bolton, Eddie Davis and Finklehoffe, due January with music by Harry Warren, with Eddie Foy, Jr. and Elaine Stritch in leading roles.

Hits Revisited

The King and I-St.James, 3/29/51. Celeste Holm, subbing for Gertrude Lawrence, during latter's six week summer vacation, is a satisfactory replacement who keeps the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical humming, agree Hobe, Variety, and Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. Trade paper reviewer noted that Holm emphasizes implicit romance between Anna and the King more than Lawrence does. Result is greater dramatic force and interest. New lead also gets more and bigger laughs, though she doesn't seem to enjoy the children as much, Hobe commented. Hawkins found her characterization most believable. Terry Saunders in role vacated by Dorothy Sarnoff was also okayed by both.

Summer Tryouts -- Con Side

Three to One, musical revue by Nancy Hamilton and Morgan Lewis, is a combination of best of duet's three revues, One For the Money, Two For the Show and Three to Make Ready. Dash, Women's Wear, found it a hodge podge pasted together to fill in a vacant week at Westport, Conn, Playhouse...The Other Foot, Clifford Goldsmith's comedy tried out at Easthampton, LI, Theatre with Thomas Mitchell, could be judged fairly, admits Vern, Variety, because of amateurish directing job of Mitchell...Sweet Lorraine, Abby Mann and Bernard Drew drama tried out at Landing, NJ, Theatre, was classed as an ancient melodrama that would never do for Breadway by Glib, Variety...The Anonymous Lover, Vernon Sylvaine comedy starring Larry Parks and Betty Garrett at Worchester, Mass, Playhouse, is strictly lightweight, summer stuff, notes Lee, Variety.

Strawhat Visits

Falmouth, Mass, Theatre production of The Glass Menagerie, produced by Richard Aldrich, is one of best summer productions Hawkins, WT&S, ever witnessed. Aldrich's arena theatre presentation of The Firefly at Hyannis, Mass, Circus, was also judged a fine production...Portrait in Black, suspense drama by Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts, pleased Coleman, Mirror, when viewed at Woodstock, NY, Playhouse. Theatre run by two New York attorneys is the critic's idea of what a genuine strawhat theatre should be, no stars and no package shows.

New York Critic in Paris

Duchess of Seaweed, French adaptation of English play entitled Miranda, pleased Watts, Post. Performances by three leads were delightful. Plein-Feu, the elaborate vaudeville show with Maurice Chevalier, was another high point of the critic's Paris sojourn...Reviewer admitted he would enjoy French playgoing more if theatres had air conditioning...First night performance of Un Beau Dimanche bored him.

News & Notes

Children's Theatre Workshop in Village has class of 30 children in 8 to 12 bracket, and tuition is $15 a week, courses running from 9 to 5 daily. First play to be presented will be James Thurber's Many Moons. A new play will be done each two weeks.

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' Cumulative NYC Ratings '

D - Daily W - Weekly M - Monthly B - Broadcast

DT - NY Times	DJC - Journal of Commerce	WCM - Chr. Science Monitor
DH - NY Herald Tribune	DWJ - Wall Street Journal	WC - Commonweal
DN - NY News	DWW - Women's Wear	WCU - Cue
DM - NY Mirror	WB - Billboard	WN - Nation
DC - NY Compass	WV - Variety	WNR - New Republic
DP - NY Post	WCD - Critical Digest	WNS - Newsweek
DJ - NY Journal American	WGN - George Jean Nathan	WNY - New Yorker
DW - NY World Tele-Sun	WWM - Ward Morehouse	WSR - Saturday Review
DB - Brooklyn Eagle	BC - WCBS Bill Leonard	WT - Time
DL - L.I.Press	BL - New Leader-WEVD	MP - Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

THE FOURPOSTER-10/24/51	PROS: 19 CON: DH DP WGN WWM BL WC WNY NONE: DWJ WN WNR WSR
GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50	PROS: 29 CON: WN
THE KING AND I-3/29/51	PROS: 29 CON: WN
THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52	PROS: 22 NONE: WGN WC WN WNR MP
THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51	PROS: 26 CON: WCD WGN NONE: WN MP
MRS. McTHING-2/20/52	PROS: 20 CON: DM DJ WGN BC BL WNY WSR WT NONE: WNR
PAL JOEY-1/3/52	PROS: 28 CON: BL NONE: WNR
NEW FACES OF 1952-5/16/52	PROS: 25 CON: DP WT WGN NONE: WN WNR
A NIGHT IN VENICE-6/26/52	PROS: 17 CON: DC NONE: WGN BC BL WNR WNY WSR WT MP
PAINT YOUR WAGON-11/10/51	PROS: 21 CON: DH DJ DP WV WWM BC WC NONE: WNR WSR
POINT OF NO RETURN-12/13/51	PROS: 25 CON: DW BL WN WNR WT
SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49	PROS: 29 CON: WT
TOP BANANA-11/1/51	PROS: 23 CON: DP DJ BL NONE: WCM WN WNR WSR
WISH YOU WERE HERE-6/25/52	PROS: DN DC DB DL DJC WV CON: DT DH DM DP DJ DW DWJ WB WWM WCU WNS WNY WT NONE: DWW WCD WGN BC BL WCM WC WN WNR WSR MP

' Off Broadway '

Living Theatre presentation of Ubu the King scheduled to open July 22 at Cherry Lane Theatre...Shakespeare Guild Festival plans to play nightly at Roof Theatre of Presbyterian Labor Temple, 242 East 14th Street. Admission will be by voluntary contribution...Edward Lawrence's new play, The Adventure of Eddie Greshaw, has been added to American Lyric Theatre repertoire program at Provincetown...Dramatists Forum seeking donations of folding chairs for its Thursday evening meetings at Amato Theatre Green Room.

Greenwich Mews Theatre production of Shaw's Widowers' Houses recommended by Rice, Post, and Rayfield, Compass, as a deft performance of GBS first play. Staged by Mike Kellin performers turn in a fine, properly stylized job. Play written in 1892 hasn't dated they agreed. But "A.R." Women's Wear, fears that the early Shaw has to be played by the Marx brothers to be made lively.

Children's Theatre Workshop, run daily at the Village Presbyterian Church House, is training its young members in the theatre arts by participation, reports McCluggage, Herald Tribune. Leaders try to stimulate the children's imaginations, to keep them alive and alert and to give direction and polish.

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' Green Room Department '

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CITRONELLA HITS...Summer show business will always be a palpable hit, because it offers the best live repertory of the best American plays of recent vintage, comments Times editorial. Many a triumph of the '30s is now an annual fixture in the hinterlands, and many a favorite performer of that decade returns to add a special glamour and nostalgia.

FUTURE IDEAS...Theatre will play an important part in "Defense of Ideas" project set up by NY Civil Defense Department, Rice, Post, reports. Creative efforts which do not dilate upon the unwholesome aspects of American life will be supported. Cedric Hardwicke will act as liaison for theatre...If Broadway expects to specialize in lavish musicals, it had better begin worrying where new talent in singing is going to come from, warns NBC Pearson...Actors' unions should plan self-enforced annuities to protect show business people, against themselves, urges Gardner, Herald Tribune.

"PRO" PRESS AGENTS...Important, though unheralded, contribution of press agent to a production, points out Burr, Playbill, is to act as the convenient whipping boy for the producer. If the press agent wasn't around, who could the producer blame for the failure of his play?

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Elliot Nugent, Male Animal, and Vivienne Segal, Pal Joey, are more popular in 1952 than they were in 1940, notes Morehouse, WT&S...Four million dollar Jones Beach Marine Stadium not designed for and not interested in theatre, insists Atkinson, Times...Wish You Were Here onstage swimming pool is wasted, because it is only used 15 minutes in the first act, times Watt, News.

LONDON REPORT...Noel Coward's Relative Values struck Watts, Post, as fairly dull, primitive and snobbish...Anne Trego's The Step Forward, tried out at London's Q Theatre, has charm, honest observation and a talent for credible dialogue, the NY critic noted...Zip Goes a Million musical was panned as dated and filled with bogus Americans...Terence Rattigan's The Deep Blue Sea is an engrossing and highly expert play which should do well on Broadway.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Sixty-six songs were written for Wish You Were Here, but only 17 are currently used in the show, Harold Rome told Sheaffer, Eagle...Esther Ralston Ziegfeld's American Venus beauty who is coming out of retirement to play The Other Foot in summer theatres, told Hawkins, WT&S, that she will not take her children to see the play because she believes when parents let children down in any way, they start running the household.

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' Theatre News Roundup '

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Joseph Wood Krutch, Nation, has resigned due to poor health, Margaret Marshall, literary editor of magazine, is covering theatre assignments...Wyatt, Catholic World, spoke to NYU Catholic Club...John Emery replaced Donald Cook, The Moon Is Blue, during latter's two week vacation...Scenic Artists strike in third week...Actors' Equity announced new restrictions on employment of alien actors...Eric Johns named editor of "Stage," succeeding S.R.Littlewood who retired...RCA Victor original cast album of Wish You Were Here released...British Drama League has set up record library to aid English actors perfect their "American" accent.

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' Six Types of Plays Defined '

Playwrights today are being shackled by actors' refusal to play parts if they "do not suit" them, Kenneth Tynan, London Evening Standard, told Playwrights Club lecture in London, "Amateur Stage" reports. Because of this, the critic said playwrights are literally forced into writing a play that falls into one of the six following types.

1. The experimental expressionist-invented by two contemporary geniuses, Marx and Freud. The era of this kind of staging is now about over, although occasionally one is produced.

2. The arena theatre, in which actors rotate like crops in order that the audience can see them as they speak. It cuts down the possibilities of grouping by about 90 percent. The arena kills intimacy stone dead. Intimacy in the theatre cannot be sustained nearer than 12 feet from the audience.

3. The Chekhov style-the worst influence on playwrights of the last 100 years, with the possible exception of Shaw. His bad influence arises from fact that he is inimitable. We had better forget Chekhov until we know how to act him.

4. Ibsen-storm in a teacup drama. This is a strange style, and a bad example for the playwright because it cripples his vocabulary and style.

5. The Verse play. The new language of the theatre is PROSE. Only 80 years ago we started to reclaim prose from the drudgery of the last 2000 years. Now we are asked to toss it back into the pit of degradation from which we have only recently brought it. Trying to combine colloquial with poetic diction is horrible. Poetry is never happy in the presence of complicated ideas.

6. The "American" style play. American mode in authors are not afraid to write long parts for girls. English writers simply don't write parts for girls under 30. They could learn from the Americans in writing female parts that give the "how" of living, as well as the "why."

' Legit Stuff '

Paint Your Wagon takes three week vacation returning August 11...Mrs. McThing to vacation until September 8...The Male Animal stock rights withdrawn during revival's Broadway run...Frank Sennes plans to follow up Peep Show, tabloid version of Broadway hit, at Holiday with Follow the Girls, also running three times a day plus picture... Gondola-on wheels selling tickets for Mike Todd's A Night in Venice at various Long Long Island locations...Vivienne Segal planning August vacation from Pal Joey, with Holly Harris subbing...Virginia de Luce's New Faces of 1952 ditty which she never is allowed to finish, "He Takes Me Off His Income Tax," has been finished and released ...Robert Clary, New Faces of 1952, doubling at Village Vanguard...Stagehand Union and League of NY Theatres contract talks opened.

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